

PLEASE SUPPORT

SB18-024: Expand Access to Behavioral Health Providers

From: Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Study Committee

Sponsors: Senators **Jahn and Tate**, Aguilar, Lambert, Priola
Representatives **Singer**, Buck, Kennedy, Pettersen

Problem Statement:

Colorado faces a health care workforce shortage in many areas, including behavioral health care providers who work with patients with substance use disorders (SUDs). With an opioid epidemic and skyrocketing overdose rate impacting all corners of the state, the need for SUD health professionals is particularly acute. Providers who hire mental health and SUD professionals report difficulty in filling positions, leading to reduced services, even though they have the physical space for beds or outpatient treatment rooms.

A successful, existing program for recruiting and retaining other types of health professionals can be adapted to increase Colorado's substance use disorder provider workforce. In exchange for student loan repayment or a scholarship, health care providers commit to practicing in a designated health professional shortage area for a certain amount of time.

SB18-024 will:

- ✓ Create an arm of the existing Colorado Health Service Corps (CHSC) for behavioral health care professionals with expertise in substance use disorders (SUD)
- ✓ Outline those professionals eligible for student loan repayment to include the following if they have mental health and substance use expertise:
 - Licensed Addiction Counselors (LAC) and Certified Addiction Counselors III (CAC-III)
 - Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)
 - Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW)
 - Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT)
 - Clinical Psychologists (Psy.D. or Ph.D.)
 - Nurse Practitioners (psychiatric or pain management APNs)
 - Physician Assistants* (PAs with substance use training and expertise)
 - Physicians with training in addiction medicine, pain management, and/or psychiatry
- ✓ Allow candidates for licensure who have completed a master's degree and are gaining the required supervised experience hours for licensure to be eligible for student loan repayment if they commit to practicing in a shortage area
- ✓ Require CDPHE to develop a new shortage designation category specific to behavioral health providers to measure an area's need for mental health and SUD professionals
- ✓ Provide scholarships to help Certified Addiction Counselors obtain the required clinically supervised work experience, education, and training to progress up the ladder of certification
- ✓ Fund the program with \$2.5 million from the Marijuana Tax Cash Fund. This will provide loan repayment to approximately 41 health professionals and scholarships for an estimated 31 Addiction Counselors annually.

Contact: Jennifer Miles for Colorado Providers Association (COPA)

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SUPPORTERS

SB18-024 received unanimous support from the 10 legislators who served on the 2017 Opioid and Other Substance Use Disorders Interim Study Committee:

Senators Lambert, Jahn, Tate, Priola, and Aguilar
Representatives Pettersen, Singer, Kennedy, Buck and Navarro

SB18-024 is also supported by the following organizations As of 1/22/18

Colorado Providers Association (COPA)
Addiction Research and Treatment Services (ARTS)
Sobriety House
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC)
National Association of Social Workers, CO Chapter
American College of Nurse Midwives, CO Chapter
Colorado Academy of Physician Assistants
Colorado Association of Local Public Health Officials
Colorado Community Health Network
Colorado Association of Addiction Professionals
Children's Hospital Colorado
Colorado Psychiatric Society
Colorado Rural Health Center
Mental Health Colorado
Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention
Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition
Colorado Psychological Association
Colorado Mental Wellness Network
IDEA Forum, Inc.
RESADA
Addiction Recovery Consulting
Healthier Colorado